

January 2016

Dear Members and Friends of Fourth Presbyterian Church:

As the Gospel of Luke tells the story...

*When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.
Luke 2:17-20*

The amazement continues! As we look back over the past year and ponder in our hearts all that God has done among us at Fourth Presbyterian Church, we too have abundant reason for glorifying and praising God. There is much to tell!

A Generous Congregation

Let me begin with a note of **praise and thanksgiving** for the generosity of the members of Fourth Presbyterian Church! After trailing behind our giving goals for the later half of the year, as often happens, Fourth members have come through in fine fashion once again. Contributions for 2015 totaled \$1,072,025, surpassing our 2014 giving by more than \$47,000!

This result is even more impressive given that our members also put forward another \$239,861 toward the Capital Campaign in 2015, bringing the total contributions for the campaign to \$1,307,977.

This combined \$1,311,886 in 2015 is an impressive level of giving for an 850 member church. *Sole Deo Gloria.* Yet our financial giving is only one part of the picture of Fourth's faithfulness and generosity. Members, officers, and staff have given generously of time and energy, through which God's grace has flowed through the congregation in ministry to one another and mission to the world.

Capital Project Completion

The **Capital Projects Committee**, working with Triangle Construction, has spearheaded a significant building program with outstanding results. The new **Youth Wing** is now open and serving the needs of our youth ministry. The new **GAIHN rooms and shower** have already begun to provide shelter for families in transition in our community. The newly renovated **Mildred Crymes** room is being enjoyed by church school classes, the Tuesday morning study, a variety of luncheons, and a whole array of other functions. The **chancel steps**, which "look like they grew there," have allowed worship to flow more gracefully without the distraction of pastors disappearing and reappearing through the side door. The **Little Folks of Fourth** are now benefitting from a more workable office, kitchen, and storage layout. The **Crossway** area has been remodeled, refreshed, and reorganized, making a bright and exciting new experience for our children and families on Sunday mornings. We are making final adjustments to brand new **audio-visual technology** throughout the church, and are now enjoying campus-wide **wireless** access. And, last but by no means least, God's mission at Fourth is now supported by a healthy endowment with the **Mamie Jolly Bruce Building Fund** that will provide for the maintenance of our facilities for years to come. Great appreciation is due to the Capital Projects Committee, Scott Kilgore (chair), Jim Bazemore, Brent Grove, Carolyn Lattimore, Sally Pellew, Marvin Quattlebaum, Sr., Charles Tennent, for their diligence and persistence over the past year.

New Staff

Among the many areas of ministry supported by the successful funding of our annual operating budget, one is the staff position of **Associate Pastor for Young Adults and Mission**. Rev. Jennifer Fouse Sheorn has been hard at

work for the past 9 months gathering and getting to know our Young Adults, as well as working with the Mission & Witness Committee to plan and lead Fourth's mission efforts. In addition to our ongoing local mission, we are anticipating two new and meaningful adult mission trips in 2016, to Baltimore and Guatemala, which Jennifer is organizing and leading.

While our youth have transitioned to the new Youth Wing, other transitions have presented a challenge, as well. After Jenn Paden was called away to another ministry, we were blessed to welcome Sean Williams into the role of **Interim Director of Youth Ministries**. Hats off to the Sean and the Youth Committee, whose diligence and long hours have provided important continuity for our youth program.

We have also enjoyed getting to know Lauren Warren, our new **Church Business Administrator**, over the past year. Lauren has had her work cut out for her learning the complex interactions of our congregation, staff, and leadership, as well as the workings of our financial system. It's a big job, and Lauren is meeting the challenge with persistence and a pleasant smile.

Christian Education

Much of our work at Fourth is focused on knowing the God revealed in Jesus Christ through studying scripture and engaging in theological conversation. We begin at the youngest ages with Crossway and Youth Sunday School. For adults our educational offerings include Bible & Theology, Interactions, Grapevine, the Tuesday Breakfast Study, the Feasting on the Word studies, Table Talk, the Pellett-Wearn lecture series, the Summer series. More about each of these classes can be discovered on the church website. In next month's pastoral letter, Rev. Patricia Gwinn will reflect on the value of these times we spend together gathered with each other around the scriptures, listening for God's Word to us today.

All Things in Moderation

In these changing times in America and in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Fourth Presbyterian Church has continued to strive to be **a moderating voice** in the midst of the often polemical rhetoric of the surrounding culture. We do well at conducting care-full conversations with one another around difficult and controversial topics. Perhaps for this reason, Fourth has become a gathering place for teaching and ruling elders in Foothills Presbytery who are working on a series of overtures to the 2016 General Assembly which are aimed at repairing the disconnect with the denomination felt by many in the pews. Details about the work of the Foothills reform group can be found at the Foothills Presbytery website. The overtures are controversial, and there is no quick fix to our denominational challenges. Nevertheless, Foothills Presbytery is raising important questions about the way we do business and bear witness in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

There is much more that could, and probably should, be told about our life together as the particular expression of the body of Christ known as Fourth Presbyterian Church. It would not be possible to mention the countless acts of faith, hope, and love that God sees happening among us week in and week out. As I look around me in amazement, I consider myself blessed to serve as the pastor of this wonderful congregation. Ministry with you continues to be fulfilling and meaningful work for me, and I look forward to serving the Lord with you in 2016 and beyond.

Grace and peace to you in Jesus Christ our Lord!

Mike

Rev. Dr. Michael J. Hoyt
Pastor